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RESILIENCE OF POLISH TERTIARY TEACHERS – HOW TO DEFINE IT AND HOW TO BUILD IT

ABSTRACT

The aim of the article is to analyse the resilience competence of Polish tertiary teachers which allowed them to cope with the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on various aspects of education. The article specifically emphasizes how the resilience competence is defined in the Polish context. The article also presents an overview of expected tertiary learning outcomes for future teachers of Polish, and English as a foreign language, in order to analyse the degree to which tertiary teacher training courses emphasize the importance of social and emotional aspects of teaching which are part of the resilience competence. Finally, the article presents selected ways of building resilience for tertiary teachers.

Key words: Polish tertiary teachers, competencies of tertiary teachers, resilience, learning outcomes, resilience for tertiary teachers

ABSTRAKT

DEFINICJA KOMPETENCJI ODPORNOŚCIOWYCH I SPOSOBY ICH ROZWIJANIA PRZEZ POLSKICH NAUCZYCIELI SZKÓŁ WYŻSZYCH

Celem artykułu jest analiza kompetencji odpornościowych polskich nauczycieli szkół wyższych, umożliwiających dydaktykom uporanie się z konsekwencjami pandemii COVID-19,

uwidaczniającymi się w procesie nauczania i obejmującymi różne aspekty edukacji. Tekst ma budowę dwudzielną: partie teoretyczne uzupełniona egzemplifikacją o charakterze metodycznym. Jest to próba odpowiedzi na pytanie, w jakim stopniu kursy uniwersyteckie przygotowujące do zawodu nauczyciela akcentują istotność społecznych i emocjonalnych aspektów nauczania wchodzących w skład kompetencji odpornościowych. W sposób szczególny zwrócono uwagę na sposób definiowania „kompetencji odpornościowych” w polskim kontekście. Przedstawiono przegląd oczekiwanych efektów uczenia się dla przyszłych nauczycieli języka polskiego i angielskiego. Na koniec zaprezentowano wybrane sposoby rozwijania kompetencji odpornościowych nauczycieli szkół wyższych.

Słowa kluczowe: polscy nauczyciele akademicy, kompetencje nauczycieli akademickich, kompetencje odpornościowe, rezyliencja, efekty kształcenia, rozwijanie kompetencji odpornościowych nauczycieli akademickich

1. Polish tertiary teachers

This text should be treated as a voice in the ongoing discussion on the shape and state of education in general, including changes in the position of the teaching profession as well as academic and tertiary teachers¹ in the global dimension, and, more recently, on the condition of teaching and teachers before, during and after the Covid-19 pandemic. The global epidemic caused by the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus, along with efforts to contain it, upset the traditional model of education, including academic education in Poland and in the world. The system of higher education around the world faced, overnight, a great organizational challenge, and a radical change in the methods of education. Academic teachers had to adapt to all these new tasks in a very short time. Were Polish teachers prepared for this?

In the course of their studies at a Polish university, preparing them for the teaching profession, they were expected to first of all: “be a good specialist with the most thorough knowledge and scientific culture (...); want to be and be a “compliant” and kind educator of young people, often through of partnership (skilfully awakening and supporting the self-educational needs of young people) (...); want to be and be an animator (inspirer), organizer, and often implementer of various educational and cultural activities related to youth culture and wider society; display a personality of value and feel the need and have the knowledge to constantly improve in various ways if they were to “give” so much and constantly to others (...); have an “open attitude” towards scientific,

¹ A. B. Strawińska, *Uwagi językoznawcy o kompetencjach odpornościowych (na podstawie profesji nauczyciela akademickiego)*, “Z Teorii i Praktyki Dydaktycznej Języka Polskiego” 2021, 30, pp. 208–210.

pedagogical, social, and cultural progress”². Since the end of the 20th century, Polish educators and psychologists have also been paying attention to individuality/creativity as a constitutive feature of the profession³.

The latest sources suggest that the modern Polish academic teacher “is to be, first of all, an active researcher and only then an educator. Students should not only listen to what the teachers have to say, which can be read in books anyway, but should (...) study knowledge in the process of its creation”⁴. This is the attitude demanded, according to Wróblewski, by the modern labour market⁵. Moreover, according to this scholar, university graduates of the future must learn to be creative, which is best achieved through direct experience of the process of creation; they should also – indirectly, with the aid of the academic teacher – acquire an education that will provide them with the opportunity to constantly adapt to new conditions resulting from the development of knowledge and technology. The younger generation of students “expects not so much ‘teaching’ (knowing that) as ‘expert’ advice (knowing how)”⁶. This is because the main source of information used by the students in this day and age is the Internet. Contemporary students have only ever heard of a world without Internet – they have never experienced it. Virtual reality is their “natural habitat, which they reach not only through computers, but also through tablets and/or mobile phones”⁷. Therefore, good educators, when organizing the educational process, should be aware of this and look for solutions that will first of all be appropriately adapted to the needs of a contemporary student. The need to take advantage of the benefits of technological progress requires academic teachers (as well as every educated person) to constantly “renew their knowledge, supplement and transform mastered skills and abilities and have flexible, critical, and heuristic thinking and a personality that is constantly rearranging cognitively and emotionally”⁸.

2 S. Wołoszyn, *Nauczyciel*, [in:] *Encyklopedia pedagogiczna*, W. Pomykało (ed.), Warszawa 1993, pp. 444–445.

3 B. Gołek, *Kompetencje współczesnego nauczyciela (wybrane obszary)*, “Rocznik Komisji Nauk Pedagogicznych” 2014, LXVII.

4 A. Dziedziczak-Foltyn, *Nauczyciele akademicki jako prekursorzy i moderatorzy społeczeństwa wiedzy*, “Nauka i Szkolnictwo Wyższe” 2006, 2 (28), p. 68.

5 A. K. Wróblewski, *Wizja uniwersytetu przyszłości*, “Nauka” 2010, 2.

6 A. Kuś, *Ludzie Uniwersytetu w dobie globalizacji*, [in:] *Edukacja w zglobalizowanym świecie*, V. Tanaś, W. Welskop (eds.), Łódź 2016, p. 156.

7 B. Sajduk, *Nowoczesna dydaktyka akademicka. Kto Kogo Jak Uczy?*, Kraków 2014, p. 13.

8 S. Wołoszyn, *Nauczyciel...*, p. 444.

2. Competence of tertiary teachers

A harmonious composition of knowledge, efficiency, understanding and willingness all, according to Czerepaniak-Walczak, “make up the «magical» word «competence»”⁹. Męczkowska distinguishes two aspects of competence in pedagogical research¹⁰. The first treats competence as the adaptive potential of the subject and assumes that “every type of human behaviour is causative: it is always an instrument used by the subject to achieve control over the external – social or natural – environment and as such is subject to modelling (...). The second approach treats competence as the transgressive potential of the subject. It is the belief that competence is a kind of deep cognitive structure that integrates elements functioning within it and balances human relations with the world”. The foundation, the base of “competence” is, to quote Kossowska and Sołtysińska [in:] Kozak-Łatkowska¹¹, “knowledge in the common understanding (declarative knowledge – I know “what”), skills (procedural knowledge – I know “how” and I can perform), and attitudes (I want and am ready to use my knowledge)”.

Taking account of the role of the teacher in generating specific student behaviours, the competencies invoked in traditional studies are: initial (adaptive), mature (reconstructive), to change (transgressive), and core, essential, so-called emancipational¹². Contemporary Polish reality forces academic teachers (and not only them) to have or develop a whole complex of competencies, i.e. substantive, psychological and pedagogical, diagnostic (related to learning about the environment and students), didactic-methodological, communicative, media and technical, those related to the control of students’ achievements and qualitative measurement of school/university outcomes, design and evaluation of school/academic and self-education programmes and textbooks, professional development¹³.

⁹ M. Czerepaniak-Walczak, *Refleksja krytyczna i jej miejsce w dyskusji nad reformowaniem oświaty (próba zastosowania)*, “Rocznik Pedagogiczny” 1997, 20, p. 69.

¹⁰ A. Męczkowska, *Kompetencja*, [in:] *Encyklopedia pedagogiczna XXI wieku*, T. Pilch (ed.), vol. 2, Warszawa 2009, pp. 693–695.

¹¹ B. Kozak-Łatkowska, *Koncepcja kompetencji w zarządzaniu zasobami ludzkimi w kontekście uczenia się przez całe życie*, Szkolenia.com (n.d.), [online], <http://www.szkolenia.com/news/806/koncepcja-kompetencji-w-zarzadzaniu-zasobami-ludzkimi-w-kontekście-uczenia-sie-przez-cale-zycie>, [retrieved: 17.05.2016].

¹² M. Czerepaniak-Walczak, *Refleksja krytyczna...*, p. 65.

¹³ Ibidem.

Research conducted by the Public Opinion Research Centre, one of the largest public opinion research institutes in Poland, clearly shows that the status of academic (as well as non-academic) teachers in Poland is deteriorating year on year. Specialists in marketing and management see the causes of this condition in, among others, this professional group underestimating modern techniques of self-promotion¹⁴. It is recommended for teachers of all levels to take advantage of so-called personal marketing, whose main task is to “arouse interest, excitement, and admiration [...] through the use of catchy communication techniques, modern technologies, as well as the benefits of creating a positive “buzz” around oneself¹⁵”. This is yet another competence an academic teacher should master.

However, in a situation of immediate threat to life and health, the quality not so much most desirable as simply necessary is – according to experts on the issue – resilience, resistance to external factors, the ability to “adapt (...) to changing conditions, (...), plasticity of the mind (...) and resistance to harmful factors”, mainly broadly understood stress¹⁶.

3. Resilience – lexicographic perspective

“Resilience competence” is part of a larger structure that psychologists call “mental strength and resilience”, which is based on such pillars as: challenge – a new and difficult task or situation that requires effort and stubbornness to deal with; confidence – a high level of self-confidence and high self-esteem; commitment – perseverance in the implementation of tasks and the ability to finish them; control – the belief that one has influence on and the ability to manage one’s own emotions¹⁷. Scholars of the topic agree that there are people who are simply born with a high level of resilience. For most people, however, this is a skill that can and, in this day and age, must be learned. Wędrychowska, a career coach and advisor, as well as HR consultant, likened developing resilience to building a protective layer around oneself, which shields one from shock, fall, or difficulties, and recommends increasing one’s own level of resilience

¹⁴ A. B. Strawińska, *Autopromocja w edukacji akademickiej*, [in:] *Edukacja polonistyczna. Metamorfozy kontekstów i metod*, M. Karwatowska, L. Tymiak (eds.), Lublin 2017, pp. 144–145.

¹⁵ P. Klaus, *Brag!: the art of tooting your own horn without blowing it*, New York 2004, p. 1.

¹⁶ *Model Kompetencji Zawodowych*, Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika w Toruniu. Biuro Karier (n.d.), [online], <https://www.biurokarier.umk.pl/model-kompetencji-zawodowych>, [retrieved: 24.11.2022].

¹⁷ M. Henke, *Rezylientne przywództwo – czy leci z nami pilot?*, [in:] *Szkolenia dla biznesu*, 2020, [online], <http://malgorzatahenke.pl/2020/08/02/rezylientne-przywodztwo/>, [retrieved: 24.11.2022].

by building up a sense of self-worth¹⁸. Increasing self-esteem can, in turn, be achieved, in her opinion, through: recognizing one's own talents, the conviction that the goals one sets will be successfully completed, involvement in charitable activities, and also healthy living.

The term "resilience competence" (pol. *kompetencje odpornościowe*) does not appear in traditional lexicographic and encyclopaedic sources in Poland. Neither does the National Corpus of the Polish Language¹⁹ record the phrase or the terms "teacher's competencies" (pol. *kompetencje nauczyciela*) or "resilience" (pol. *rezyliencja*). We had hoped that the latest digital tools, namely the Monco Pl²⁰ search engine, would help us clarify the sense of resilience competence in Polish, as it applies to the new model academic teacher. Monco PL is a digital tool that uses query syntax, the PELCRA search engine, and the National Corpus of the Polish Language to browse selected (limited to a thousand) online sources (mainly journalistic texts). It allows users to find examples of usage of the latest vocabulary, which adds to and expands the National Corpus²¹. Entering the phrase "teacher's competencies" (pol. *kompetencje nauczyciela*) in Monco Pl results in 26 concordances. Among the 37 instances of the phrase, there are repeated components such as: pedagogical, mediation, IT competence, and e-teacher's competencies. The sources from which the contexts for the phrase "teacher's competencies" come from include, among others: gostynin24.pl, chodzierz.naszemiasto.pl, ngo.pl, interia.pl, forsal.pl, news.google.com, ostrowmaz24.pl, chojnice24.pl, wiarapl.pl, niedziela.pl, potralsamorządowy.pl, naszraciborz.pl. As corpus analysis indicates, the term appeared most frequently in autumn 2017. The first instance of the phrase recorded in Monco PL comes from 17.01.2013, the last – from October 29.10.2020. The search engine reveals 8 types of texts containing the phrase. It appears, among others, as a component of the title of a press article or professional literature cited in the text and as an element of a subtitle:

- *Kompetencje nauczyciela – jak je rozwijać?* (Teacher's competencies – how to develop them?) (29.10.2020, naszraciborz.pl);

¹⁸ E. Wędrychowska, *Rezyliencja – 5 sposobów na to, jak budować swoją "warstwę ochronną", by radzić sobie w trudnych doświadczeniach zawodowych*, Ewa Wędrychowska Blog (n.d), [online], <http://ewedrychowska-coaching.pl/blog/rezyliencja-5-sposobow-na-to-jak-budowac-swoja-warstwe-ochronna-by-radzie-sobie-w-trudnych-doswiadczeniach-zawodowych/>, [retrieved: 12.01.2021].

¹⁹ <http://nkjp.pl/index.php?page=0&lang=1>, [online], [retrieved: 28.11.2022].

²⁰ <http://monco.frazeo.pl/>, [online], [retrieved: 28.11.2022].

²¹ B. Duda, K. Lisczyk, *Narzędzia cyfrowe w polonistycznej dydaktyce akademickiej – zastosowania, możliwości, perspektywy*, "Forum Lingwistyczne" 2018, 5, pp. 143–154.

- Krzywoń D., *Kompetencje nauczyciela w zreformowanej szkole* (Teacher's Competencies in the Reformed School), [in:] M. T. Michalewska (red.), *Kompetencje nauczycieli w zreformowanej szkole* (Teachers' Competencies in the Reformed School), Katowice 2003 (6.11.2017, katolik.pl);
- *Kompetencje nauczyciela a jakość szkoły* (Teacher's Competencies and School Quality; 20.11.2017, portalsamorzadowy.pl);
- *Niepokoją się też o niedoinwestowane szkoły, o konieczność tworzenia dużych klas, pytają o kompetencje nauczycieli i program nauczania (...)*. (They are also concerned about underinvestment in schools, the need to create larger classes, they ask about the teachers' competencies and the curriculum [...]); 2.09.2014, wiara.pl).

Linguistic data collected via Monco Pl shows that the term "teacher competencies" is treated by Polish speakers as a synonym for skills, dispositions, mental qualities, and qualifications. Here are some examples of contexts:

- *Kompetencje nauczyciela muszą być w tej chwili naprawdę odpowiadające rewolucji 4.0.* (The teacher's competencies must now be truly correspondent to the 4.0 revolution). (13.10.2017, portalsamorzadowy.pl);
- *Praca pedagoga-wychowawcy to nie tylko kompetencje realizacyjne (wykonawcze), ale również kompetencje interpretacyjne* (The work of a teacher-educator is not just executive competence, but also interpretive competence; 6.11.2017, katolik.pl);
- *Za najważniejszy element procesu dydaktycznego uważała kompetencje nauczyciela w tym jego charyzmę, empatię i moralność* (She considered the teacher's competencies, including charisma, empathy, and morality, to be the most important element of the didactic process; 23.05.2012, interia.pl);
- *Podstawowa sprawa to świadectwo oraz kompetencje nauczyciela i katechety, a także mądry, przemyślany program wychowawczy i dydaktyczny* (The basic issue is the testimony and competence of the teacher and catechist, as well as a wise and thoughtful educational and didactic programme; 2.09.2017, niedziela.pl);
- *Jest bardzo istotne, aby rozwijać kompetencje nauczycieli języków, którzy będą zdolni nie tylko do wprowadzania strategii nauczania w klasie, ale także do inspirowania i motywowania uczniów* (It is very important to develop the competencies of language teachers, who will be able to not only introduce teaching strategies in the classroom, but also to inspire and motivate students 12.04.2015, onet.pl).

Unfortunately, as far as defining the desired, necessary repertoire of academic teachers' competencies, Monco Pl does not offer any answers. Neither does it, similarly to other traditional and modern vocabulary resources, offer anything for the phrase "resilience competence". The Dictionary of the Polish

Language²² (*Słownik języka polskiego*) defines the lexeme *resiliencja* as: 1. ability to cope with sudden problems; 2. strength, resistance to various forces, with the qualifier “environment” (*środowiskowo*). In professional literature, especially in the field of psychology, pedagogy, socio-economics, and cultural anthropology, because there is no Polish equivalent fully expressing the English term “resilience”, a foreign form has been adopted, often used in the Polish version: *rezyliencja*²³. The concept is defined in scholarly publications in two ways. In the narrower sense, it generally means efficient functioning in difficult periods of life, possessing skills appropriate to age, and performing developmental tasks despite the presence of adversity. In a broader sense, however, it is a “dynamic process” reflecting relatively good adaptation in spite of dangers or trauma. It is also referred to as “bouncing off the bottom”, meaning a return to mental health and relatively good functioning after experiencing a highly stressful event²⁴. Significantly, as Bzymek emphasizes, resilience is not the same as good mental health or high social competence, because the phenomenon takes into account being exposed to a number of threatening factors and preserving the relatively good mental health of the individual despite the influence of these factors²⁵. Related concepts used by Polish researchers analysing and describing resilience are: flexibility, resistance, the ability to regenerate (pol. *elastyczność, odporność, zdolność regeneracji sił*).

4. Resilience in curricula for future teachers of Polish and English

Training courses for content and language teachers in Polish institutions of higher education mainly focus on developing the pedagogical skills of teacher trainees, at the same time neglecting the development of resilience skills of future educators. For instance, the learning outcomes, i.e. the expected knowledge, skills, and social competencies of MA level graduates of the University of Białystok who wish to work as teachers of Polish²⁶, state, among other things, that in the area of knowledge a graduate:

²² <https://sjp.pwn.pl/>, [online], [retrieved: 24.11.2022].

²³ A. Borucka, K. Ostaszewski, *Koncepcja resiliencje. Kluczowe pojęcia i wybrane zagadnienia*, “Medycyna Wieku Rozwojowego” 2008, 2 (12), pp. 588–589.

²⁴ *Ibidem*.

²⁵ A. Bzymek, *W szkole Heleny Radlińskiej odczytywanej na nowo z resiliencje w tle*, [in:] *Pedagogika*, Z. Aleksander (ed.), Gdańsk 2008, p. 23.

²⁶ The authors of the article work with future teachers of Polish and English. Hence, the articles contain the analysis of the learning outcomes for students majoring in teaching Polish and in teaching English as a foreign language.

- knows and understands classical and contemporary theories of human development, upbringing, learning, and teaching or education and their practical value²⁷;
- knows and understands standards, procedures, and good practices used in pedagogical tasks
- knows and understands the role of the teacher in shaping learners' attitudes and behaviours;
- knows and understands what inclusive education is and knows how to implement its principles;
- knows and understands how to select teaching methods and teaching aids, including online resources, taking into account various learning needs;
- knows and understands legal foundations of the education system necessary for the proper implementation of educational activities;

in the area of skills a graduate:

- can observe pedagogical situations and events, analyse them using psychological and pedagogical knowledge, and propose solutions to potential problems;
- can design and implement teaching, taking into account diverse learning needs;
- can monitor learners' progress, their activity and participation in the social life of the school;
- can work with students to develop their interests and talents, selecting teaching content, tasks, and teaching techniques in order to promote learners' achievements;
- responsibly organize school work and extracurricular activities respecting the learners' right to rest;
- use assessment and feedback to stimulate learners for self-development.

All in all, there are 39 learning outcomes for teachers of Polish in the area of pedagogy and psychology²⁸, but the only ones that are somewhat related to social and emotional aspects of teaching are the ones from the area of social competencies, stating that:

²⁷ The curricula and learning outcomes are available on the university website. For the purposes of the article they were translated into English by the authors of this paper.

²⁸ *Program studiów. Kierunek studiów: filologia polska nauczycielska. Rok akademicki 2021/2022*, [online], https://filologia.uwb.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Filologia_polska_nauczycielska_Program.pdf, [retrieved: 19.11.2022]. The learning outcomes for teachers of Polish as well as teachers of English as a foreign language are divided into two groups: the first group includes learning outcomes from the areas of psychological and pedagogical training (which are further subdivided into three areas – i.e. skills, knowledge, and social competencies), while the second group includes learning outcomes from the area of teaching methodology and voice emission.

- a graduate can work in a team, and cooperate with other teachers, pedagogues or other specialists, parents or legal guardians and other members of the school and local community;
- a graduate can communicate with people from various environments and in various emotional states, peacefully resolve conflicts, and create a communication-oriented atmosphere in the classroom and beyond;
- a graduate can apply universal ethical norms and principles in their work and is guided by respect for all people;
- a graduate can build a relationship based on mutual trust between all the subjects of the educational process, including parents or legal guardians, and involve them in activities improving the effectiveness of education.

The learning outcomes²⁹ in the area of psychological-pedagogical training for English philology students majoring in language teaching at the MA level are almost identical to those developed for future teachers of Polish. Consequently, equally little attention is paid to social and emotional aspects of teaching.

It should also be stressed that, even though some³⁰ graduates will teach at the tertiary level, the curriculum and the learning outcomes do not reflect the nature of teaching in institutions of higher education, probably because the percentage of graduates who are going to educate university students is small. It should be emphasized here, however, that: “University teaching can be defined as an academic activity that requires extensive professional skills and practices, as well as a high level of disciplinary and other contextual expertise”³¹. Therefore, one might wonder to what degree the lack of context-specific teacher training will affect the quality of teaching done by the graduates who will teach at the tertiary level. Inadequate teacher preparation combined with neglecting social and emotional aspects of teaching during teacher training might lead to educators being unable to effectively cope with, for instance, demotivation, stress and burnout, especially since tertiary teachers will be expected to provide creative and passionate teaching in order to maintain the quality of education, while at the same time conducting vigorous research³².

²⁹ *Program studiów. Kierunek studiów: Filologia obca nauczycielska. Rok akademicki 2021/2022*, [online], <https://filologia.uwb.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Zalacznik-nr-1-Program-studiow-Filologia-obca-nauczycielska.pdf>, [retrieved: 19.11.2022].

³⁰ Even if no data are available, it can be safely assumed that the number of graduates from both philologies who will teach at universities is very small.

³¹ S. Mastrokoulou et al., *Rediscovering Teaching in University: A Scoping Review of Teacher Effectiveness in Higher Education*, “Frontiers in Education” 2022, vol. 7, Article 861458, p. 2.

³² *Those who can teach, should. Editorial*, “Nature Chemical Biology” 2007, no. 3 (12), p. 737, [online], <https://www.nature.com/articles/nchembio1207-737>, [retrieved: 23.11.2022].

5. Building resilience on one's own

Contrary to popular belief, teaching is so demanding that during the “vulnerability period”, i.e. the first 5 years in the profession, 40–50% of teachers decide to pursue a different professional path³³. The teaching profession seems to be in dire need of a “cure” that would allow its members to thrive and would generate renewed interest in teaching. In fact, it is the under-researched and neglected (especially in the context of Polish tertiary teaching) resilience that helps instructors tackle educational challenges and adversities³⁴. Resilience is believed to boost instructors' enthusiasm and commitment, and increase the quality of teaching, which, in turn, improves learning outcomes.

The paucity of training courses that would help pre-service and in-service content and language teachers develop and enhance socio-emotional strength means that teachers are forced to independently investigate effective ways of building resilience. Interestingly, one of the myths surrounding resilience is the notion that it is developed in only one way. Davis, however, observes that: “Resilience is actually a complex, multi-dimensional trait that is built in multiple ways”³⁵. Hence, tertiary teachers should bear in mind that there are no better or worse approaches to building resilience, and what works for some of them might be of no use for others. Moreover, instructors should be aware that everyone is equipped with the capacity for resilience. As Truebridge observes: “The question isn't whether or not one has resilience, but rather whether or not it has been tapped”³⁶.

While experimenting with new resilience-building habits, educators should remember that resilience is not built in a day. Instead, “[r]esilience is built one thought and one action at a time”³⁷ and it should be a steady process continuing throughout one's whole professional career. Furthermore, teachers ought not to forget that while they might feel equipped to manage one stressor, another one may become too burdensome at a given point in time. The American Psychological Association (APA)³⁸ emphasizes that the ability to deal

³³ A. Gallant, P. Riley, *Early career teacher attrition: new thoughts on an intractable problem*, “Teacher Development” 2014, 18 (4).

³⁴ L. Sikma, *Building Resilience: Using BRiTE with Beginning Teachers in the United States*, [in:] *Cultivating Teacher Resilience*, C. F. Mansfield (ed.), Singapore 2021.

³⁵ P. Davis, *5 Myths About Resilience*, “Forbes” 2016, [online], <https://www.forbes.com/sites/paula-davis/2016/02/08/5-myths-about-resilience/?sh=160af58e5a57>, [retrieved: 21.11.2022].

³⁶ S. Truebridge, *Resilience: It Begins With Beliefs*, “Kappa Delta Pi Record” 2016, 52 (1), p. 25.

³⁷ E. Aguilar, *Simple Tips for Boosting Teacher Resilience*, Edutopia 2018, [online], <https://www.edutopia.org/article/simple-tips-boosting-teacher-resilience/>, [retrieved: 21.11.2022].

³⁸ American Psychology Association, *Resilience*, APA Dictionary of Psychology (n.d.), [online], <https://dictionary.apa.org/resilience>, [retrieved: 22.11.2022].

with adversity is dependent, among other things, on the way in which individuals perceive and engage with the world, the availability and quality of social resources, and the application of individual coping strategies. Consequently, the resilience of tertiary teachers might differ greatly, not only across a given country, but also across one institution of higher education, as departments might have completely different working conditions and organizational cultures.

6. Resilience – taking care of one’s mind

Even though resilience can be developed in numerous individual ways, those educators who wish to be able to effectively cope with and work through challenging professional and personal experiences should consider establishing strong relationships with all the participants of the educational process, i.e. their colleagues, students, parents, and the administration. Team Tony³⁹, drawing on the work of Tony Robbins, an American philanthropist and life and business strategist, advises people working on overcoming adversity to surround themselves with others who share the same desire to grow and develop. So those teachers who wish to bounce back from educational challenges and stay focused on their work need to surround themselves with colleagues who are actively treading the same path.

The community that teachers establish might, among other things, normalize seeking help⁴⁰. Professional doubts and concerns are frequently kept hidden for fear of appearing vulnerable and inadequate. Teachers might be reluctant to ask for help for fear of being perceived as incompetent. Asking for help might also make teachers feel ill at ease, because it requires surrendering control to someone else, sometimes to less experienced colleagues.

Interestingly, according to Hofstede-Insights, Poland is a country characterized by very high uncertainty avoidance, which can be defined as “the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations and have created beliefs and institutions that try to avoid these”⁴¹.

³⁹ Team Tony, *Learn how to overcome adversity. How to build resilience and overcome anything*, Tony Robbins (n.d.), [online], <https://www.tonyrobbins.com/mind-meaning/overcoming-adversity/>, [retrieved: 21.11.2022].

⁴⁰ E. Aguilar, *Helping Teachers Thrive*, Edutopia 2017, [online], <https://www.edutopia.org/article/helping-teachers-thrive>, [retrieved: 21.11.2022].

⁴¹ Hofstede Insights, *Country comparison*, Hostede Insights (n.d.), [online], <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/poland/>, [retrieved: 24.11.2022].

In such cultures asking for help might be seen as a threatening situation, as it carries the risk of the unknown – educators cannot be one hundred percent certain that their request will not be rejected. Furthermore, in high uncertainty avoidance cultures teachers are expected to be experts who have all the answers, and the fear of losing face and authority might fuel a teacher's unwillingness to reach for help. Moreover, teachers might refuse to look for a helping hand because they know that their colleagues have their own worries to take care of and they assume that their own struggles, in the face what others are dealing with, are insignificant. In a situation like this, another deterrent against leaning on others is the fear of being perceived as needy. Finally, educators are not willing to turn to someone else for assistance as they might fear that their professional community will shun and reject them. That is why educators need a strong professional community which values and even actively encourages asking questions, taking risks, and asking for advice, and at the same time removes the stigma of learning from mistakes.

Asking for help is of crucial importance as it validates the value and worth of those who it is being requested from, especially those teachers who are new to the profession or who have less extensive teaching experience. Teachers also have to bear in mind that seeking help and asking questions suggests intellectual curiosity and perseverance to learn more. After all, as Drumhiller and Brannum observe: "Academic culture, at its core, is based on intellectual curiosity and pursuit of the unknown"⁴². In a similar vein, Price-Mitchell argues that academic performance is based on three pillars: intelligence, effort, and intellectual curiosity⁴³.

Furthermore, asking for help saves time. Searching for solutions might be a time-consuming process, especially when teachers do not know where answers can be found. The experience and expertise of other educators who are rowing the same boat is within easy and quick reach, especially when the ties between the community are strong. And this is yet another thing that asking for help does: it strengthens community bonds.

Not only is asking for help beneficial for educators, but it also allows students to perceive it not as a sign of weakness, but as normal and expected behaviour. However, teachers first need to model help-seeking behaviour to their students by, for instance, sharing stories about times when they needed sup-

⁴² N. Drumhiller, K. Brannum, *Explore Your Intellectual Curiosity as an Academic Researcher*, American Military University. EDGE 2015, [online], <https://amuedge.com/explore-your-intellectual-curiosity-as-an-academic-researcher/>, [retrieved: 22.11.2022].

⁴³ M. Price-Mitchell, *Curiosity is a Core Predictor of Academic Performance*, Roots of action (n.d.), [online], <https://www.rootsofaction.com/curiosity-academic-performance/>, [retrieved: 22.11.2022].

port⁴⁴. Additionally, when students are given shout-outs in class for proactively reaching out for help, they are less likely to hinge on self-sufficiency and more likely to understand, just like their teachers have, that help-seeking behaviours are a form of self-advocacy, which is an important life skill. In tertiary teaching, self-advocacy, understood as the ability to communicate one's needs, is most frequently discussed in the context of students with specific learning differences, because it allows them to effectively discuss their educational challenges with their instructors and the administration. Consequently, they are able to request appropriate support as well as accommodations and modification. However, all students, regardless of their specific learning difficulties or lack thereof, should be encouraged to assert their needs.

Those who support help-seekers should be appreciated. Praise, just like being asked for help in itself, makes individuals feel valued and encourages them to do their best. Furthermore, appreciation facilitates reciprocation. In fact, educational communities should foster a culture of appreciation as it builds stronger relationships, increases efficiency and innovation, and boosts morale. Interestingly, low morale may be a sign of low resilience and it is resilient groups that are most likely to respond to change and disruption with a growth mindset and in a flexible and innovative manner⁴⁵.

Said growth mindset is also a quality to be cultivated by resilient individuals. Those who do believe that their skills and intelligence can be improved with time, effort and persistence. Those who cultivate a growth mindset are able to ask themselves the question: "What can be gained from this situation?" and put themselves in a mindset which helps them remember that they can always learn. Individuals with a growth mindset are more likely to take on challenges and use them to develop new skills and broaden their knowledge, which, in turn, leads to greater achievements⁴⁶.

Aguilar emphasizes that resilient people, apart from having a growth mindset, also anchor themselves "in their why"⁴⁷. She argues that resilient teachers are driven by purpose, and recommends that educators think about why they teach and what legacy they want to leave, and use that as their anchor. One of the most interesting understandings of teacher legacy was

⁴⁴ S. Gosner, *How Kids Can Overcome the Awkwardness of Asking for Help*, Edutopia 2021, [online], <https://www.edutopia.org/article/how-kids-can-overcome-awkwardness-asking-help/>, [retrieved: 22.11.2022].

⁴⁵ Team Resilience, *How to Know if Your Team Has Low Resilience*, Payne Resilience Training & Consulting 2022, [online], <https://payneresilience.com/blog/low-team-resilience>, [retrieved: 24.11.2022].

⁴⁶ C. S. Dweck, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, New York 2007.

⁴⁷ E. Aguilar, *Building Resilience, Preventing Burnout*, Edutopia 2017, [online], <https://www.edutopia.org/article/building-resilience-preventing-burnout>, [retrieved: 22.11.2022].

proposed by Couros, who argued that: “Your legacy as an educator is always determined by what your students do. You change the world by empowering your students to do the same”⁴⁸. Spencer emphasizes that “When you empower your students to own their learning, they became makers and dreamers and builders and tinkerers. They grow into innovators who change the world”⁴⁹.

Awareness of the legacy teachers would like to leave behind means that they know themselves. In other words, they take time to think carefully about the values they hold, which might include, among other things, their socio-political identity, as well as their personal and professional preferences, skills and aptitudes. All this can help instructors develop a strong sense of purpose. This meaningful intention can, in turn, help teachers concentrate on the things that matter to them most, both in their professional and private life. Moreover, as Pink suggests, high purpose individuals are more likely to leave their comfort zones because they welcome new opportunities, they have more energy to exploit them, and they are less likely to be held back by adversities⁵⁰.

Knowing oneself implies, among other things, understanding one’s emotions, which, according to Aguilar, can become “resources and sources” of energy⁵¹. However, in order to have a healthy relationship with their emotions, teachers should examine how their thinking is influenced by their emotional states and learn how to work with, rather than against, their emotions. Furthermore, it must be stressed that being resilient does not imply suppressing tough and uncomfortable emotions. Resilient individuals experience a wide range of emotions, from anger to enjoyment. In fact, research by Quoidbach *et al.* suggests that “emodiversity”, i.e. the variety and relative abundance of emotions that humans experience, increases resilience to negative events, just as biodiversity makes an ecosystem more resilient in the face of change⁵². In nature a complex ecosystem cannot be annihilated by a single predator, pest or disease. Similarly, thanks to emodiversity, one’s emotional ecosystem must not be dominated by specific emotions, in particular detrimental ones, such as acute

⁴⁸ G. Couros, *Your legacy as an educator is always determined by what your students do*, George Couros. Learner. Speaker. Author (n.d.), [online], <https://georgecouros.ca/blog/archives/7461>, [retrieved: 24.11.2022].

⁴⁹ J. Spencer, *What’s Your Legacy as a Teacher?*, John Spencer 2017, [online], <https://spencerauthor.com/your-legacy-teacher/>, [retrieved: 24.11.2022].

⁵⁰ D. H. Pink, *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*, Edinburgh 2011.

⁵¹ E. Aguilar, *Onward: Cultivating Emotional Resilience in Educators*, New York 2018.

⁵² J. Quoidbach *et al.*, *Emodiversity and the Emotional Ecosystem*, “Journal of Experimental Psychology: General” 2014, 143 (6), pp. 2057–2066.

stress, anger or sadness. Apart from experiencing a wide range of emotions, resilient people cultivate, according to Aguilar, realistic optimism, which serves as a constant reminder that challenges and struggles pass with time and that positive change is never out of the equation⁵³.

7. Resilience – taking care of one’s body

Teachers who wish to build their resilience, apart from taking care of their mind, ought to attend to their bodies, too. After all, listening to one’s organism is one of the pillars of resilience – without a healthy and nourished body teachers might find it difficult, if not impossible, to tackle adversities in their professional and personal lives.

One of the first thing teachers can do for their bodies is to prioritize sleep. Healthy sleeping habits are thought to improve and enhance learning, problem solving skills, attention span, decision making and creativity⁵⁴. Furthermore, a good night’s sleep is believed to reduce stress and irritability, consequently enhancing one’s wellbeing. As Huffington points out in her Ted Talk, while it is possible to focus on specific tasks while being sleep-deprived, sufficient sleep is crucial to seeing the bigger picture⁵⁵. Sadly, she also notes that not getting enough sleep is often incorrectly linked with productivity and seen as a point of pride. While Huffington mainly associates this attitude with business circles, it is also quite common among tertiary educators. A resilient academic teacher, however, is more often not one that can work long into the night, but one that understands the value of a good night’s sleep.

However, sleep alone is not enough to effectively manage, for instance, teaching-related stress. Teachers need to eat healthy and balanced meals regularly to ensure that their bodies are adequately nourished. Research suggests that healthy dietary patterns, including vegetables, fruit and fish may reduce, among other things, depressive symptoms in the general population. According to Saris *et al.*, “Robust associations have been established between nutritional quality and mental health, with the bulk of this evidence indicating a protective effect of healthy diets on depressed mood, and the newest research supporting

⁵³ E. Aguilar, *Helping Teachers Thrive...*

⁵⁴ G. B. Feld, S. Diekelmann, *Sleep smart-optimizing sleep for declarative learning and memory*, “Frontiers in psychology” 2015, vol. 6, Article 622.

⁵⁵ A. Huffington, *How to succeed? Get more sleep*. Arianna Huffington. TEDWomen 2010, [online], https://www.ted.com/talks/arianna_huffington_how_to_succeed_get_more_sleep, [retrieved: 24.11.2022].

a detrimental impact of unhealthy diets on the mental health of young people and adults”⁵⁶.

Adequate nutrition is of vital importance, but human bodies also need physical activity for proper functioning. According to Arida and Teixeira-Machado, not only does exercise minimize cognitive deficits by inducing better neuroplasticity and cognitive reserve, but it is also believed to counteract brain pathology⁵⁷. From a more prosaic perspective, physical activity strengthens muscles and improves bone density, which prevents personal injuries. Yet, this is another issue that people in academia often neglect, as pointed out by Sir Ken Robinson: “they live in their heads (...) They look upon their body as a form of transport for their heads”⁵⁸.

Discussing the challenges tertiary teachers face, Jongepier and van de Sande (2021) accuse academics of taking pride in their burnout⁵⁹. In their article, they discuss, in detail, causes behind this situation, the analysis of which is beyond the scope of this publication. However, they also encourage academics to question the current *status quo* in order to be academic and have private lives, to do their research, be intellectually passionate and inspired, as well as inspiring, but in normal working hours which allow them to cultivate bonds, not only within the professional community, but also with their family, friends and significant others. As Aguilar emphasizes: “In moments of stress, those who thrive are those who strengthen relationships with others”⁶⁰.

8. Conclusions

Teaching has always been considered a stressful profession, but the outbreak of Covid-19 increased the number, as well as the severity, of the challenges teachers face. Teacher stress is known to affect health, well-being, work attitudes, turnover, as well as learner performance. In order to effectively tackle contemporary educational challenges, teachers need a modernized set of com-

⁵⁶ J. Sarris et al., *International Society for Nutritional Psychiatry. Research consensus position statement: nutritional medicine in modern psychiatry*, “World Psychiatry” 2015, 14, pp. 370–371.

⁵⁷ R. M. Arida, L. Teixeira-Machado, *The Contribution of Physical Exercise to Brain Resilience*, “Frontiers in Behavioural Neuroscience” 2012, 14, Article 626769.

⁵⁸ K. Robinson, *Do Schools Kill Creativity?*, Ken Robinson. TED 2006, [online], https://www.ted.com/talks/sir_ken_robinson.do_schools_kill_creativity, [retrieved: 24.11.2022].

⁵⁹ F. Jongepier, M. van de Sande, *Workaholic academics need to stop taking pride in their burnout*, “Times Higher Education” 2012, [online], <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/opinion/workaholic-academics-need-stop-taking-pride-their-burnout>, [retrieved: 22.11.2022].

⁶⁰ E. Aguilar, *Helping Teachers Thrive...*

petencies, which will include the ability to develop resilience. Resilience is of particular importance for tertiary teachers, who, apart from delivering high quality teaching, are required to conduct extensive research. Even though Polish researchers study (e.g. from a lexicographic perspective) and recognize the importance of this skill, teacher training courses still neglect it. Consequently, pre-service and in-service educators are left to their own devices when it comes to building effective resilience habits and behaviours. However, tertiary teachers should not be required to do that on their own, especially in view of the fact that they are not prepared for working in situations of higher education either. Hence, there is a need in the Polish context for more extensive research into resilience and the nature of tertiary education, the results of which could be used to design teacher training courses allowing teachers to develop a new set of competencies appropriate for the challenges of 21st century education.

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